



NEWS

Wisconsin Department of Transportation



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June 18

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Mayor: Roundabouts make streets safer, more efficient

(De Pere) The mayor of a city with the nation's largest number of roundabouts says his city installed the traffic systems to handle an explosion in population – and that his city's drivers are overwhelmingly pleased with them.

"We've grown about 200 percent since 1990 – and we stayed ahead of the growth with good roadway designs that incorporate roundabouts," said James Brainard, mayor of Carmel, IN, an Indianapolis suburb of 85,000 that has the highest number of roundabouts in the country: "they have worked better than we could have possibly imagined."

With 40 roundabouts in major intersections, and nearly 30 more in design and planning stages, Carmel has seen accidents with injury at those intersections reduced by 78 percent – and drivers have saved nearly \$1 million by burning 470,000 fewer gallons of gasoline, he said.

"They're safer, they cost less and they pollute less," said Brainard, one of the nation's leading advocates for roundabouts. "And they work just as well whether you're in Carmel, Green Bay, California or France."

In a signal-controlled major intersection, there are 32 possible "conflict points" created where vehicles must stop, start, and cross into traffic to make turns. "In a roundabout there are 8 – and the traffic keeps moving. That's why they're more efficient and pollute less. It's also why accidents are far fewer – and when there are accidents, they're far less serious," he said.

Roundabouts had their critics in Carmel as well, Brainard noted.

"Change is always hard. And, of course, there are still a few critics. But we're delighted with our decision and the vast majority of the community loves the roundabouts and understands their benefits. Carmel has even won national awards for our roundabout program because of its positive impact on the environment."

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